

January 21, 2016

Project Stakeholders:

We are pleased to release the San Juan National Forest Recreation Site Analysis Draft Five-Year Plan of Work, which provides management recommendations for the 129 sites that comprise the Forest's developed recreation program. The San Juan National Forest, in cooperation with the Rocky Mountain Regional Office and external stakeholders, began this in-depth analysis in January of 2015.

The U.S. Forest Service is keenly aware of the benefits outdoor recreation provides to the American public, but at the same time, the agency faces unprecedented challenges in this arena. Major trends and drivers affecting our recreation program include changes in equipment technology, use patterns and activities, and climatic conditions, as well as increased fixed-cost obligations at the local level and wildfire-fighting costs affecting the agency budget nationwide.

While developed recreation sites are often high-profile and offer popular types of activities, they represent only one segment, but one with a high cost proportion, of the Forest's total recreation program. We also manage wilderness, outfitter/guide and ski area special use permits, visitor services, heritage sites, trails, motor-vehicle travel, etc. All of these responsibilities rely on the same limited agency resources and funding for proper delivery and management. While we remain dedicated to providing the best array and quality of recreation services possible, this must be tempered by balancing the reality of available resources with the diverse experiences the public expects.

The Recreation Site Analysis process began with the Forest's recreation team ranking facilities as to their overall value, and then considering a variety of options for each site that could include repair, decommissioning, redevelopment, closure, operation by concessionaires or non-profit partners, initiating user fees, and/or site improvements. The rankings and initial team recommendations were released last spring, generating public feedback that has now been incorporated into the enclosed documents. I am confident that the changes made in response to the early feedback we received will give us a better foundation to build upon as we move forward.

We have approached this project keenly aware of the economic impacts the Forest's recreation program has on local businesses, government, and other constituents. The San Juan National Forest's abundant and diverse outdoor opportunities contribute greatly to our way of life here in Southwest Colorado. According to an economic study by the Outdoor Industry Association in 2011/2012 – in Colorado alone – outdoor recreation generated nearly \$1 billion in state and local tax revenue, while generating about 125,000 industry-related jobs. Thus, great effort has been made to keep local government officials and their constituents apprised and involved throughout the process.

The draft Recreation Site Analysis provides a comprehensive view of our developed recreation program and includes a Program of Work designed to help us invest limited funding and partnership resources where it is of most benefit. We also hope this process will help all parties

better understand the pressing recreation management challenges we face. By promoting transparency and communication, it is my hope we are generating a mutual understanding of these challenges to help us most effectively tackle them together as a community.

We encourage submitting your feedback on the draft documents by Monday, March 21, 2016, after which time we will finalize the Recreation Site Analysis Five-Year Plan of Work. At that time, an environmental analysis will be conducted to analyze ground-disturbing actions with yet another opportunity for public involvement. We look forward to putting the finalized recommendations into action beginning this year. Thank you for helping to move the San Juan National Forest toward a sustainable long-term recreation program.

Sincerely,

Kara L. Chadwick

San Juan NF Supervisor